

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 01117 082221Z

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ACTION CU-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 1117

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, US, NU

SUBJECT: FY 76 FULBRIGHT STUDENT PROGRAM: ERNESTO CARDENAL STUDY

REF: URCOM (CU/ARA) DATED FEB 26

BEGIN LOU)

1. EMBASSY REGRETS THAT IT CANNOT ENDORSE MR. BORGESON'S APPLI-
CATION FOR A GRANT TO STUDY POET-PRIEST ERNESTO CARDENAL.
WE BELIEVE THAT CARDENAL IS TOO CONTROVERSIAL AND THE POLITICAL
CLIMATE OF THE COUNTRY TOO SENSITIVE AT THE MOMENT FOR THE USG
TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH THIS PROJECT. (END LOU)

(BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL)

2. FYI - CARDENAL IS PERHAPS NICARAGUA'S BEST KNOWN INTERNATIONAL
LITERARY FIGURE. ALTHOUGH RESPECTED FOR HIS ART LOCALLY HE IS
ALSO KNOWN AS A MARXIST AND A STRONG APOLOGIST FOR CUBA. HIS
ANTI-AMERICANISM SEEMS CASUAL AT FIRST GLANCE, BUT IT CAN BE
VICIOUS. FOR INSTANCE, LAST YEAR HE ACCUSED A U.S. VOLUNTARY
ORGANIZATION, WHICH WAS INVOLVED IN A RURAL PUBLIC HEALTH CAMPAIGN,
OF STERILIZING NICARAGUANS AT THE BEHEST OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY.
CARDENAL IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE SMALL NICARAGUAN COMMUNIST
PARTY, BUT HE SYMPATHIZES OPENLY WITH THE FSLN, A CASTORIST
GUERRILLA-TERRORIST ORGANIZATION, AND IS BELIEVED BY MANY TO BE
AIDING THEM. CONTRARY TO MR. BORGESON'S ASSERTION IN HIS PROPOSAL.
CARDENAL IS OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM OF CHURCH AFFAIRS AND IS
USUALLY FOUND EITHER ISOLATED AMONG THE INDIGENES OF A GROUP OF
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PAGE 02 MANAGU 01117 082221Z

ISLANDS IN LAKE NICARAGUA OR GIVING POETRY READINGS IN WESTERN

CAPITALS.

3. BECAUSE OF THIS BACKGROUND WE PERCEIVE MANY POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR THE U.S. AND MR. BORGESON IN PURSUING HIS RESEARCH. CARDENAL WILL NO DOUBT INITIALLY SUSPECT HIM OF BEING A U.S. AGENT COME TO SPY ON HIM AND THE ENTREE MAY BE PAINFUL. BORGESON'S CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH HIM THEREAFTER WILL RASISE GON SUSPICIONS OF USG INTENTIONS. IF INDEED, CARDENAL IS INVOLVED IN SUERSIVE ACTIVITIES, IT MAY NOT TAKE VERY MUCH TO IMPLICATE BORGESON TOO, IF HE BECOMES AN INTIMATE OF CARDENAL. FINALLY, WHILE CARDENALS' ARTISITIC REPUTATION MAY GROW OR DIMINISH ACCORDING TO POLITICAL OR ARTISTIC FORCES OVER WHICH WE HAVE NO CONTROL, IT WOULD NOT SEEM TO BE TO OUR ADVANTAGE IN THE PRESENT CLIMATE TO SEE HIS STANDING ENHANCED, LET ALONG FINANCE WHAT WOULD PROBABLY BE A PANEGYRICAL STUDY OF HIM.
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